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ACADEMIC FREEDOM

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE CASE OF PROFESSOR JOSEPH K. HART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

On May 18, 1915, at a meeting of the Board of Regents of the University of Washington, "Regent Miller moved that Dean Bolton and Professors Lull and Hart, of the Department of Education, be elected for one year from August 1, 1915, on condition that each of them file his resignation with the board to take effect not later than August 1, 1916, and that the letter of President Landes, in reference to this matter, be made a part of the minutes of this board." (From the minutes of the Regents, May 18, 1915.)

This was in effect a dismissal of the three named with a year's notice. The reasons for this action are contained in the letter of President Landes mentioned in the minutes. This letter was addressed under date of May 17, 1915, to Dean Frederick E. Bolton, Professor Herbert G. Lull and Professor Joseph K. Hart. In it, Mr. Landes says:

The time has come when official recognition must be taken of the deplorable conditions existing in the department of education. During the past three years, the personal antipathy, animosity, and distrust existing among and between you have increased steadily in intensity until now a state of bitterness exists which has destroyed the co-operation and co-ordination absolutely necessary for the successful administration of any department. . . . This condition of affairs has brought reproach to the institution and can be tolerated no longer. . . .

I am now thoroughly convinced that the general welfare of the university demands that a radical change take place in the personnel of the department of education. It is my plan, at the forthcoming annual meeting of the Board of Regents, to recommend that you three gentlemen be elected for one year only, with the understanding that you will hand your resignations to the Board of Regents not later than August 1, 1916.

With each of you, throughout your years of connection with the university, I have had very cordial and pleasant personal relations. I regard each of you as an able teacher and one capable of rendering a fine service to this institution. I need not assure you that my recommendation to the Board of Regents will be made with the profoundest regret that such a step seems necessary.

At the same meeting of the Board of Regents (May 18, 1915), Professor Hart was granted a leave of absence for one year on his

request. After receiving notice of his dismissal, he sought to forego his leave, asking to be appointed his own substitute for the year. This request was opposed by Dean Bolton and denied by President Suzzallo (who had taken office July 1, 1915). In a letter dated July 30, 1915, the latter said:

My investigations of your relations with the department of education indicate that you could not be fully co-operative under the present strained conditions. And so, for the good of the department and the university, as well as for your own best working power and usefulness, it is better not to appoint you as your own substitute, as you had requested.

Under the circumstances, you express a preference not to file the resignation conditional to your appointment for the next academic year. I think, therefore, I shall follow your preference as to a final settlement of the whole matter and let your connection with the university cease automatically July 31, 1915.

I am returning the resignation which you were kind enough to send for my use in case it seemed best to handle the matter by a method less congenial to you.

The preference of Professor Hart mentioned in this letter is expressed in a letter to President Suzzallo dated July 22, 1915, as follows: "I have no interest in resigning in order to hold this job for another year. I have every interest in being of service to the state, the university, my profession and the student body just as long as possible. I should like to remain here another year, if I can render service; if I cannot, I know that the remaining will be formal and useless."

The connection of Professor Hart with the university was accordingly severed July 31, 1915, Professor Lull remained in the university until the following spring when he was called to the State Normal School at Emporia, Kansas. Dean Bolton remained also, and was reinstated in February, 1916.

It was this reinstatement of Professor Bolton which called forth a letter (dated February 28, 1916) from Professor Hart addressed to Dean John H. Wigmore, President of the American Association of University Professors, in which he said:

I want to call to your attention the situation which exists in the University of Washington, and ask that you appoint a committee of your association to investigate the matter.

Last May, at the annual meeting of the Board of Regents, Acting-President Landes recommended that Dean F. E. Bolton, Associate Professor Lull and myself (an assistant professor) all of the department of education should be re-elected to the faculty for another

year on the condition that we should all hand in our resignations to take effect before the end of the new year for which we were being re-elected. The ostensible and avowed reason for this action was that there was a lack of co-operation in the department. The regents approved the recommendation. In addition, a leave of absence for the ensuing year (which I had asked for, previously) was granted me—which meant that I was almost immediately released from active connection with the university.

Now, it was freely charged at the time, charges appearing in several papers, and being voiced by representative men and women of the city and state, that the whole matter was a political "frame up," for the express purpose of getting rid of *me*; that there was no intention of dismissing Dean Bolton; that there were no real charges against Associate Professor Lull; but that, since I had been very active in all sorts of social and civic work, and since my name had been freely mentioned in caucus of the majority party of the legislature as one who must be got rid of, the real object of the move was to secure my dismissal, using a *departmental* difficulty to hide the *political* nature of the action, thus making it all seem like a purely *educational* affair. I have made no public statement about the matter, waiting to see what the ultimate outcome would be. That outcome has been reached this past week: *Dean Bolton has been retained in the university* as it was freely predicted he would be; Associate Professor Lull has been eliminated, not because there were any real charges against him, but (as it seems to me) in order to prove that *my* removal was not *political*.

These statements contained, in effect, charges of so serious a nature as to warrant an investigation. Accordingly, a sub-committee of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure was appointed by Chairman A. A. Young, consisting of Professor O. K. McMurray (California), W. D. Briggs (Stanford) and Harry Beal Torrey (Reed), to make an investigation into the circumstances attending Dr. Hart's retirement from the University of Washington, and report upon the case.

This committee arranged a conference with Dr. Hart and President Suzzallo (representing the University of Washington) to which both Dr. Hart and President Suzzallo were requested to invite any witnesses who might aid in determining the material facts. The conference was held July 26-28, 1916, in Seattle, the committee being represented by its chairman. The testimony of twenty-five witnesses was taken and numerous documents submitted. Many letters on various phases of the situation and interviews with several members of the faculty completed the body of evidence.

On these facts the committee has based the following conclusions:

1. That there was a serious lack of harmony within the department of education for which Professors Bolton, Lull and Hart were jointly responsible.

2. That no evidence has been presented showing that their dismissal was a result of political or other external pressure on either Board of Regents or Acting President Landes.

3. That the conditions within the department were alone adequate grounds for this action.

Respectfully submitted,

HARRY BEAL TORREY, *Chairman.*

W. D. BRIGGS.

O. K. McMURRAY.

The Committee on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure has examined the report of the sub-committee on the case of Professor Joseph K. Hart. It approves the procedure followed by the sub-committee and recommends the publication of the report.

ALLYN A. YOUNG, *Chairman.*